



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Announces Final Rule to Expand Boundaries of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern and to Modify Transit Provisions

On July 17, 2015, NOAA Fisheries published a final rule (80 FR 42423) to implement Amendment 8 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region (Coral Amendment 8). Regulations will be effective on August 17, 2015.

The amendment extends protections for deepwater coral ecosystems by expanding the boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, and the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

Within Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, the use of bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap is prohibited. If aboard a fishing vessel, anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited. Mid-water trawls are also prohibited in Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

Coral Amendment 8 also implements a transit provision through Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern for fishing vessels with rock shrimp onboard. When traveling through the area, vessels are required to have gear appropriately stowed and maintain a minimum speed of five knots. Vessel speed is determined by a vessel monitoring system registering a ping (signal) at a rate of 1 ping per 5 minutes.

More Information

For more information on Coral Amendment 8, please click on this link to the Frequently Asked Questions found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html.

Maps of the revised Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern can be found on our website at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/fisheries/s_atlantic/index.html

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

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